

THREE FREEDOMS UNDER THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

Cases of violations of basic human rights in Serbia 28 October - 10 November, 2022



Freedom of expression

-RTS journalist verbally and physically attacked

Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) journalist Tamara Tankosić was verbally and physically attacked on October 17, 2022, while on assignment at the Faculty of Law of the University of Belgrade. An unknown person first hit her without any communication, then followed her and hit and scratched her at the front door, telling her that she "knows who she was". On that occasion, she threatened the journalist with the words that "she will find her after the event at the faculty". The case was reported to the competent authorities.

Threats to Autonomija portal columnist Dragan Bursać

Autonomija portal columnist Dragan Bursać has received threats, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) announced. As stated, the threats were sent through Instagram, and it was about threats "to attack the life and body of a respected journalist." The announcement stated that Bursać is often targeted because of his writing on subjects such as dealing with the past and criticism on nationalist policies in the regions, while the attacks also included one on his car earlier.

Continued pressure on activists who protested the new GUP of Novi Sad

Portal 021.rs reported that the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office (OJT) in Novi Sad launched an investigation against 12 people who participated in the protests against the adoption of the General Urban Plan in this city on July 21, 2022, accusing them of violent behavior and assault to an official in the performance of duties. It was reported that OJT has confirmed that no proceedings have yet been initiated against members of the private security, who violently knocked down and detained the participants of the protest that day, which is why a criminal complaint was filed against two members of the security. Several civic initiatives and organizations have spoken out on this occasion, stating that the goal was to "discourage and intimidate citizens in expressing their opinions." They called the actions "political persecution" and "selective application of the law", and that reactions regarding the violence against the participants of the protest were absent from the institution of the Ombudsman, as well as from the Department of Internal Control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which did not respond to the complaints received. During the session of the local Novi Sad assembly on July 21, 2022, where the agenda included the adoption of the new General Urban Plan, several activists were exposed to violence by members of private security during the protest, where they expressed their opposition to potentially harmful urbanization of the city, including the one concerning the green oasis of Šodroš.

Death threats to the editorial office of the newspaper Danas

The independent daily newspaper Danas received **an anonymous message** through an encrypted email service threatening a terrorist attack on their newsroom due to the paper's editorial policy. The email, sent with the subject "Belgrade Charlie Hebdo", in reference to the 2015 shooting in the offices of the French satirical newspaper, goes on to describe an attack on the Danas newsroom in graphic detail, announcing that the daily's journalists, editors and columnists are in "mortal danger", threatening them with "salvoes of bullets", which will "break their windows and ricochet above their heads" before "[passing] through [their] skulls and [sending them] to limbo". **The threatening message notes that the motivation for this attack is the daily's reporting on Kosovo, Republika Srpska and Montenegro, and goes on to accuse Danas and other independent Serbian media of openly siding with "Albanian separatists"**. The email explicitly singled out columnist Snežana Čongradin, who has been a target of threats, harassment and even physical assault in the past due to her work. In addition to Čongradin, the email lists the names of several other Danas columnists and independent journalists working for other outlets.

Threat of violence against Danas daily

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Source: Danas, B.C., N1

KRIK found guilty in a SLAPP case

The Crime and Corruption Research Network (KRIK) **was found guilty** in a SLAPP case initiated by the former Head of the Security Intelligence Agency, now Minister of Internal Affairs, Bratislav Gašić. The lawsuit came after KRIK reported from a public trial by quoting a wiretapped conversation used as evidence against a crime group, in which it can be heard that the group had ties with Gašić. Before publishing the text on its portal in April 2021, KRIK tried to reach Gašić for a comment but with no success. He only answered after the text went online, but he refused to talk to journalists and filed a lawsuit in May 2021 demanding half a million RSD (over 4000 EUR) in compensation for "damages to his honor and reputation". KRIK stated that the verdict "was handed down in an unusually fast time frame for domestic trials - after only two hearings" and that "the judge banned most of the questions that the KRIK editor and their lawyer asked Gašić in court". **It was also reported that the judge in question, Nataša Petričević Milisavljević, has ties to Nikola Selaković, a high-ranking member of the Serbian Progressive Party and new Minister for Labor.** In 2016, she stated that her husband was in "extremely good and collegial relations, as well as long-standing friendly relations" with Selaković, when she requested to be disqualified from presiding over a case in which journalist Slaviša Lekić sued Selaković. Despite this, the court rejected her request, and she took the case, subsequently dismissing the lawsuit.